

Spring Clean

Your Way to a Safer Kitchen

When you're shaking off the winter with spring cleaning, it's a great time to target harmful bacteria that can lurk on kitchen surfaces and even in your refrigerator. *Salmonella*, *Staphylococcus*, *E. coli* and *Listeria* are just some of the bacteria that may be hanging out in your kitchen. While you can't see or smell bacteria, they are everywhere, and they especially like moist environments. A clean and dry kitchen helps protect you and your family from foodborne illness.

Some cleaning tips you should practice year round to make your kitchen and your meals safer include:

Always clean surfaces thoroughly with hot, soapy water. After thoroughly washing surfaces with hot, soapy water, you can sanitize them with a diluted chlorine bleach solution or a disinfectant kitchen cleaner. Use just one teaspoon bleach to one quart of water. Let the solution stand on the surface for a few minutes; then blot dry with clean paper towels.

Disinfect dishcloths often. Launder dishcloths and towels frequently using the hot water cycle of the washing machine. Then be sure to dry them in the dryer. Dishcloths harbor bacteria and, when wet, promote bacterial growth. Also, consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. When done, throw away the towel.

Rid your fridge of spills bacteria, mold and mildew. Clean your refrigerator weekly to kill germs that could contaminate foods. To tackle bacteria, mold and mildew, clean interior refrigerator surfaces with hot, soapy water. Rinse with a damp cloth; dry with a clean cloth. Manufacturers recommend against using chlorine bleach as it can damage seals, gaskets and linings.

Clean your kitchen sink drain and disposal once or twice a week by pouring a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water down the drain. Food particles get trapped in the drain and disposal, creating the perfect environment for bacterial growth.

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).



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